

**River Valley Charter School
Board of Directors Meeting
Meeting # 272
October 20, 2020 5:00 pm**

In accordance with the Executive Order applying to MA Open Meeting Law, this meeting will be held virtually on Zoom ID: 85118775314 at 5:00 p.m.

Meeting was called to order at 5:07 pm

In attendance

Pam Armstrong - chair
Mark Bishop - treasurer
Nancy Durkee
Erin Bradley Irose
Nina Keery – elected as interim vice-chair
Alfred Link
Alexa MacLachlan
Catherine Martin
Karina Moltz - secretary
Greg Noyes
Rebecca Schwer shwere
Erin Seaton
Albert Ting
Anna Wetmore

Absent:

Amber Hewett

Members of the public:

RVCS Revelation: Rebecca Hamel, Grades 2/3 FSR teacher. Rebecca shared information about the platforms being used, philosophy behind the approach, and gave updates on how the remote program is running. Rebecca appreciates the support that the administrators are providing, and the board is supporting. The learning curve of blending the Montessori method with technology is steep, and will have to be addressed when the pandemic is over. Rebecca shared a video that a family made about an E1 student's schedule and daily routines.

Vote: motion to approve September minutes

Motion: Erin Bradley Irose
2nd: Nina Keery

Vote

Yes: all in attendance

No:

Abstain:

Public Comment:

Armin Behmen (parent of E1 student): had reached out to BOT about the calendar and its inclusivity. Erin Seaton offered that Armin's voice and perspective are very important and he can lend to discussion of DEI.

Mark Belanger: public comment is written and part of board packet

Director's Report

Covid Response: Kimberly Putney reported on the response to covid positive case at RVCS last week. RVCS is trying to make decisions based on science and data, which can be difficult to do when emotions and fear are involved. A parent contacted RVCS on Friday to say that her child had tested positive. Close contacts were identified and asked to leave school. Kimberly followed up with the Board of Health, who did further contact tracing. Teachers met to discuss the situation and recommit to health protocols.

Erin Bradley Irose: Are the kids who were sent home going to be required to have a negative covid test before they come back?

No, but they will quarantine for 14 days. DESE does not mandate that kids are tested before they come back to school. If they get symptoms in that time, they would go into isolation and have to get tested.

Erin Bradley Irose: the school will need to be sensitive about how kids are brought back in, and make sure that there is not stigma.

JLE: cohort was notified even if close contacts were not identified, so that families could have the choice of having their kids be virtual for a time. 3 families decided to take that option.

Albert Ting: why was the whole cohort not quarantined?

Kimberly Putney: based on the dept of health close contact criteria, the other kids in the cohort did not meet the criteria for close contact.

Albert Ting: how do you identify who has had close contact in a group of 10 kids?

Kimberly Putney: goes to classrooms often to monitor spacing and to make sure that kids are apart. Teachers would be asked about any collaborative work that has taken place, or any closer than planned contact that students have had. The case student was also interviewed, as was their family, and there were no more instances where the CDC criteria to call a contact “close” was met.

Anna Wetmore: reread the policy several times, which includes the metric of 3 feet being considered okay if people are masked. Would that kind of information lead teachers to think that closer distance is okay?

Kimberly Putney: that information is included in the DESE protocol. Some changes were made by RVCS – like requiring masks all the time, and sending kids home quickly if they become symptomatic. Teachers know that children must be kept 6 feet apart at all times. Kids can sometimes come within 3 feet of each other but only in passing, not for extended periods of time.

Erin Bradley Irose: important for Jonnie Lyn and Kimberly to know that nobody is faulting them for the event or for the potential recurrence.

Albert Ting: is the 15 minute period cumulative or consecutive minutes?

Kimberly Putney: it depends. Guidance has varied. Seems to depend on the type of exposure – if someone coughs in your face it only takes a few seconds, but may be more dangerous than standing within 6 feet of someone who is not coughing, for instance.

Albert Ting: would it be helpful to have a recommendation from the BOT in terms of which direction we think judgments should go? For instance, more conservative or less in terms of responses and decisions about who goes home and is quarantined, etc.

Nina Keery: thinking about Mark Belanger’s proposal, and the opportunity that is provided to think about the response and what should happen. Important also to remember the teachers and their levels of stress while being questioned and feeling responsible. Could teachers jot down notes on any interactions that might include close contacts?

Jonnie Lyn : it is very difficult to rely on memory and have teachers try to recall what happened. A logbook has been started for anyone to enter the classroom to record their visit.

Mark Bishop: what kind of support can we offer to help the families who are impacted?

Pam Armstrong: Mark Belanger’s idea of convening a group that evaluates the covid response is worth considering.

Greg Noyes: Mark’s idea of an action-response evaluation is spot on. Alerting the whole cohort to the diagnosis was smart, as families could then make their own choice. Kids should have some agency – have them record their interactions and potential close contacts.

Erin Bradley Irose: if a committee is formed it has to be really quick, if the exposed kids are coming back in 2 weeks.

Jonnie Lyn: often consults with Dr. March, always in touch with Kimberly. If parents were polled, probably half of them would want the school to be more conservative and half would want the school to have a higher risk tolerance.

Erin Seaton: wants to check in on how Jonnie Lyn is doing, and feeling. Wondering if it makes sense for the school to make a statement about the need to balance risk and assess what works for their families. Important for everyone to understand the difficult position of meeting the needs of all families, including a lens on equity, and how significant the decision is to shut down a school or a cohort.

Catherine Martin: as a board, we should make sure that we are helping Jonnie Lyn get what she needs. Catherine's impression is that Jonnie Lyn was giving families the chance to speak further with her and to share their concerns and questions. Sometimes that is as much as can be given.

Pam Armstrong: we don't have closure, and the discussions will continue.

Director's Report continued...

Reopening team was told to plan for 12 weeks, and actually planned for 16 weeks. It's not as easy to pull the reopening team together since everyone is now working, so figuring out what school will look like post Dec 22 is a very big job and some changes may need to be made to the schedule. JLE will need the Board's support for presenting future plans and potential changes.

Families were sent a survey about their plans moving forward – staying remote, staying hybrid, etc. the data from those surveys is incredibly important in determining where things go

Title 9 Policy is not ready to be voted on tonight

Family Communication Policy is still being reviewed and considered

Finance Committee: presentation of audit report, discussion of summary and audit process (documents are in board packet). Recommendations are made that are fairly standard, especially given the current demands of the world. Big thanks to Debbi for all of her work on this long process.

Discussion:

Vote: to approve audit (exact wording is in board packet documents)

Made by: Mark Bishop

2nd: Greg Noyes

Yes: all in attendance

No

Abstain

Accountability Committee

Development Committee:

Committee on Trustees

Vote: to nominate Nina Keery as vice chair

Made by: Pam Armstrong

2nd: Alfred Link

Yes: Pam Armstrong, Mark Bishop, Nancy Durkee, Erin Bradley Irose, Alfred Link, Alexa MacLachlan, Catherine Martin, Karina Moltz, Greg Noyes, Rebecca Schwer, Erin Seaton, Albert Ting, Anna Wetmore

No:

Abstain: Nina Keery

Discussion of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives:

Erin Seaton: RVCS is a school that is comfortable for students who don't feel marginalized. Students who feel marginalized don't have that same sense of comfort.

Armin Behmen: historically, people who fight for equality, inclusion, are traditionally seen as trouble makers and annoying. Not being included is emotionally distressing. Seeing the calendar that was sent out to the community with no reference made to the changes that had been made to the calendar was upsetting. It is not the responsibility of the student or the parents to educate the senior leadership and governance bodies. Was struck by Jonnie Lyn's email that she said she's not familiar with holidays that are not in the Judeo-Christian tradition. The purpose of any committee that would be formed would be to prevent oversights from happening. Discussed ways to make families feel more included and to empower teachers to communicate with school leadership and to discuss. Goal of having these discussions is to have as many voices present as possible.

Erin Seaton: having a DEI audit would be a first step. Important for an outside perspective to be part of that, but also critical that the initiative comes from within, and that all members of the community are included and seen.

Nancy Durkee: thanked Armin for coming to the meeting and for sharing his concerns with the BOT.

Jonnie Lyn: thanks Armin for coming to the meeting. Calendar was approved by BOT, so its important to keep in mind that responsibility falls with all of the BOT meetings.

Erin Seaton: Jonnie Lyn invites this kind of conversation, and has always been welcoming and supportive

Vote: Motion to adjourn

Made by: Greg Noyes

2nd: Erin Seaton

Yes: all in attendance

No:

Abstain:

7:38 pm Board adjourns